Suggestion on Mea's Premises

2701. DR. KARAN SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a suggestion has been received that the Ministry of External Affairs instead of putting up a new Building complex, it should move into Ashoka Hotel premises which may be renamed Ashoka Bhawan in view of its magnificent architecture and ideal location.

(b) if so, Government's reaction to this suggestion?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) On receipt of the suggestion, the concerned Ministry of the Government was approached by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry was advised that Government had accepted the recommendation of the Disinvestment Commission that hotels situated in prime locations like Delhi and Bangalore may be handed over to established hotel chains through a competitive bidding process to be run on a long-term structured contract on lease-cum-management basis.

Pressure from U.S. on the release of Hurriyat Leaders

2702. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Hurriya leaders were released only under pressure from President of U.S.;

(b) whether it is a fact that U.S. are working behind the scene to bring India and Pakistan and the Hurriyat to the negotiating table; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) The